

**From:** Press Office [Press.Office@exec.ny.gov]  
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GOVERNOR ANDREW M. CUOMO

## GOVERNOR CUOMO ANNOUNCES CLOSURE OF ADDITIONAL PRISONS FOLLOWING RECORD DECLINES IN INCARCERATION AND CRIME RATES

*Closures Advance Governor's Landmark Criminal Justice, Correction, and Re-Entry Reforms*

*Governor Cuomo's Action Builds on Legacy of Closing the Most Prisons in State History*

Governor Andrew M. Cuomo today announced plans to close up to three correctional facilities following record reductions in the State's incarcerated population and reported crime. Specifically, under legislation introduced as a budget amendment, the Department of Corrections and Community Supervision will select the prisons, transition staff and incarcerated individuals, and cease facility operations by no later than September 1, 2019. This decisive action is proof positive that the Governor's smart and fair criminal justice reforms are working to reduce reliance on mass incarceration and improve the rehabilitation of the individuals who are involved in the justice system.

"In my first State of the State address eight years ago, I said prisons are not a jobs program. Since then, I am proud to have closed more prisons than any governor in history and at the same time proved that New York can remain the safest large state in the nation. But we must do more," **Governor Cuomo said.** "These new closures are another step toward reversing the era of mass incarceration and recognizing that there are more effective alternatives to lengthy imprisonment."

Since Governor Cuomo took office in 2011, the prison population has [declined](#) by nearly 10,000 - a 16.7% reduction - from 56,419 to 46,973 people, as of today. In fact, the current population is at its lowest level in thirty years and leads the nation with the lowest imprisonment rate of any large state. From its peak of 72,649 twenty years ago, the population has decreased by more than 25,000 people - a 35.3% reduction. As the number of people involved in the criminal justice system plummeted during his administration, Governor Cuomo has taken aggressive action to right-size the correctional and juvenile justice system, closing 24 prisons and juvenile detention centers, more than any governor in state history. These prison closures eliminated over 5,500 beds resulting in an annual savings of approximately \$162 million. This restructuring was [recommended](#) by the Governor's Spending and Government Efficiency (SAGE) Commission.

New York's reduction in prison population has coincided with significant decreases in reported crime, including both violent and property offenses. In 2017, reported crime [reached](#) an all-time low since statewide reporting began in 1975. Preliminary data for 2018 shows that crime continued to decline for the sixth consecutive year and will mark yet another historic low. Over the past decade, the state's crime rate has declined by nearly 25% due to the precipitous decline in crime and increase in number of residents. This has cemented New York's position as the safest large state in the nation.

Now, the shrinking population of individuals in state custody and plunging crime rate have resulted in the need for fewer correctional facilities. At the Governor's direction, DOCCS will carefully review the operations at its 54 correctional facilities and select up to three for closure based on a variety of factors, including but not limited to physical infrastructure, program offerings, facility security level, specialized medical and mental care, and potential reuse. The closure plan will not anticipate staff layoffs and will provide impacted DOCCS employees with opportunities to transition to other facilities or positions. In prior facility closures, more than 96% of staff have chosen to continue state service, retire, or pursue other opportunities. While it is ultimately dependent on the exact facilities, the closures are estimated to eliminate at least 1,200 beds and result in an annual savings of, at least, \$35 million. The budget amendment provides the Department with the authority to close the prisons on an expedited schedule.

### **Governor Cuomo's 2019 *Justice Agenda* and Criminal Justice Reforms**

Today's announced prison closures join a suite of progressive proposals within the Governor's 2019 *Justice Agenda* to ensure the promise of full, true justice for all New Yorkers. One of the pillars of the agenda is an aggressive effort to ensure fairness in the criminal justice system. Specifically, the Governor is urging the State legislature to address injustice by passing reforms to end cash bail, ensure the right to a speedy trial, and modernize the discovery process. The Governor is also calling for drastic reforms to improve the re-entry and reintegration process for individuals returning from incarceration.

These comprehensive proposals build upon the list of important and long-overdue reforms to New York's criminal justice system achieved under Governor Cuomo. Over the past two years, Governor Cuomo led the successful effort to raise the age of criminal responsibility, passed legislation that required law enforcement to video-record custodial interrogations for serious offenses, allowed the use of photo arrays to identify witnesses to be admissible at trial, and extended the landmark *Hurrell-Harring* settlement's indigent criminal defense reforms to the entire state, becoming the first state in the nation to completely overhaul its public defense system. Additionally, Governor Cuomo formed the State's first *Council on Community Re-Entry and Reintegration* in 2014 to address obstacles formerly incarcerated people face upon re-entering society. Since its creation, the Council has helped implement changes to improve re-entry ranging from adopting "Fair Chance Hiring" principles in state agencies to issuing guidance that forbids discrimination at New York-financed housing based on a conviction alone.

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